



## ISRAEL'S 2003 ELECTIONS: A VICTORY FOR THE MODERATE RIGHT AND SECULAR CENTER

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*This article analyzes the reasons for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's re-election victory and considers what the vote represented in terms of the electorate's views on various current issues and the balances among political parties in Israel. The article also takes a brief look at the formation of the new government and where it is most likely headed in the near term.*

On January 28, 2003, Ariel Sharon became Israel's first incumbent prime minister to be re-elected since Menahem Begin won a second term in 1981. As opposed to Begin's 1981 victory (when he barely retained power, winning only 0.5 percent more of the vote than his Labor party rival),(1) Sharon was re-elected in a landslide that doubled his party's number of seats in the Knesset (see Table 1 below).

While this outcome surprised few, having been predicted by opinion polls from the campaign's start,(2) Sharon's victory seemed to mystify many political pundits in Israel and abroad. Well-known *Ha'aretz* commentator Yoel Marcus was especially flustered:

During Sharon's 20 months in office, the country has skidded downhill in every possible sphere: The economy is six-feet under. More Israelis have been killed in Mr. Security's day than under any other prime minister. The man has never come up with a peace initiative. We've been turned into untouchables in the eyes of just about the whole world. And despite it all, everyone still loves Arik.(3)

So how is it that a country that historically has no compunction about

throwing its leaders out of office gave overwhelming approval for an encore performance to a government that seemed to fail on every front?

Beyond the battle between the country's two largest parties, there were two other major trends in this election worth noting. One is the weakening of sectarian politics in general, which had a major impact on several Russian immigrant parties. Another victim of this trend was Shas--the Sephardi (Oriental), Orthodox-led Jewish party that was the surprise success story of the 1999 elections. Though it had jumped from 12 to 17 Knesset seats in 1999, Shas lost over one-third of its voter base in 2003, which translated into a loss of 6 seats.

Lastly, while Shas dropped back to near-1996 levels, its main rival--Shinui, a staunch secular party--jumped from 6 mandates to 15, replacing Shas as the third largest party. Combined with the sweeping Likud victory mentioned above, Shinui's triumph in these elections enabled a development many once thought impossible: a government formed without the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) parties--a first since 1974 and a very important development for matters of religion and state.

**VICTORY FOR THE MODERATE  
RIGHT, LOSS FOR THE LEFT AND  
THE EXTREME RIGHT**

The Israeli public took a significant swing rightward following the failure of the Camp David Summit in July 2000 and the subsequent outbreak of violence the following September.(4) This shift was a key factor in Sharon's election in 2001, though the longer-term effects were not clear at that time. What has now become apparent is that the shift was to the moderate right, with those who had already been on the right actually having softened their positions to some degree regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.

#### *Why Sharon Won*

Sharon was the election's real victor, though his Likud party shared in this success, doubling its strength from 19 to 38 seats. Before the national unity government broke up in November 2002, Sharon held less than one-third of the seats necessary to form a coalition (19 of 61). The Likud was wholly dependent on the agreement of a large coalition of parties--first and foremost of whom was Labor (26 seats). With Labor Party doves like Haim Ramon and Yossi Beilin railing daily against the decision to sit in a unity government, Sharon had to appease enough of Labor's demands to let its leaders justify staying in the coalition.

At the same time, attacking Sharon from the right within the Likud party, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was considered an even more serious challenge since his popularity within the party was formidable. Having led Sharon in opinion polls from January through April,(5) an especially foreboding sign of Netanyahu's strength came in May 2002 when he convinced the Likud Central Committee to vote against any possibility of agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state--over Sharon's strong objection.(6)

Within 90 days of elections being called, however, Sharon managed first to defeat Netanyahu in the Likud primaries and then trounce Labor in the general elections. As a result, Sharon began his

second term from a position of incredible strength--both inside his party and in the Knesset as a whole.

The key factor for understanding Sharon's seemingly paradoxical victory in the primaries and general election is this: while the general security and economic situation over the past two years has by all measures deteriorated drastically, leaders are not simply judged by their achievements. Rather, they are judged by the accomplishments they achieved versus the potential voters believe they had to achieve better results. If voters decide that their leaders are not implementing the best solutions offered, they usually sack the incumbent. This is what happened when voters decided that Yitzhak Shamir was not forthcoming enough on the peace process (1992); Shimon Peres was too soft on security (1996); Netanyahu was not advancing the peace process as much as possible (1999); and that Ehud Barak was negotiating under fire and offering too many dangerous concessions to the Palestinians while getting nothing in return (2001).

In January 2003, the average voter (and especially the crucial swing voter) decided that, given the situation Sharon faced, no other candidate offered a more realistic solution or was likely to do better. The constraints Sharon faced included:

- 1) The Palestinians--or at least the militant groups that the leadership lets set the agenda--were bent on inflaming the intifada. Most Israelis believe that groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which had long rejected any peaceful solution and claimed terrorism could defeat Israel, would pursue such a policy no matter how Sharon responded to the intifada. Equally, Palestinian polls showed that a plurality of Palestinians (nearly 50 percent) saw the intifada's goal as Israel's destruction.(7) To the average Israeli voter, this meant Palestinian views and policy--and not any excessive force or failure to offer better peace terms by

Sharon--had defined the conflict. Those Israelis unhappy about Israeli strategy were more likely to blame the previous Labor-led government rather than the current one for all the problems they were facing.

2) Most Israelis believe that at present (and especially so long as Yasir Arafat leads the Palestinian Authority) there is no chance to end the conflict by negotiations.(8) Most Israelis believe that Barak's Camp David and Taba proposals had been serious and very generous (for many, even too generous, leaving Israel with nothing else to offer).(9) However, having seen that even those proposals were insufficient for the Palestinian side, most Israelis decided that either the Palestinians were not truly interested in a compromise peace settlement, or that if they were, it was only one in which they did almost no compromising. Moreover, many Israelis believe that negotiating before the cessation of violence would persuade the Palestinians that violence had been successful in achieving political gains, and could encourage them to return to that tactic in the future.

3) Aside from doubting any negotiated agreement was possible in the near future, Israeli voters were also skeptical that the solution proposed by Sharon's opponents--unilateral withdrawal from most of the West Bank and Gaza--would make Israel more secure.(10) While most Israelis want a border that separates them from the Palestinians, such a withdrawal was seen--as had happened with the Barak concessions and the unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon--as more likely to escalate attacks than to create a more peaceful situation. Lastly, while a fence would reduce the number of suicide bombers, it would not be able to eliminate cross-border attacks or attacks on settlements, and would be totally ineffective against rocket attacks similar to those that hit Israeli towns surrounding the Gaza Strip.(11)

This evaluation represented a consensus judgment on the existing

situation and not the preference of Israelis or their long-term goals. For example, 63 percent of Israelis are ready to dismantle most settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians and, until an agreement is reached, 64 percent support a freeze on further expansion of these settlements.(12)

This debate over unilateral withdrawal did eventually translate into enough public pressure to force Sharon's previous government to build a security fence, though without a withdrawal, along part of the Green Line. In fact, if there was one security-related issue that Sharon was significantly vulnerable on, it was that the majority of Israelis (59 percent) thought he was moving too slowly in building the security fence.(13) Additionally, Sharon's government had only pledged to build a partial fence in a few selected areas--a strategy highly unlikely to succeed in stopping terrorism. Sensing this vulnerability, Sharon's Labor opponent Amram Mitzna made this into a significant, though not decisive, campaign issue.(14)

4) Sharon also benefited from the fact that even voters who doubted there was a peaceful solution to the violence did not think a more aggressive approach would produce a better result. Especially since Israel began Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002 and Operation Determined Path in June, most believed there was little the military should be doing that it was not doing already.(15)

Moreover, during the campaign, Israel's forces seemed to have turned the tide of the conflict. Despite the many foreign observers and statesmen who said Israel's military effort--including incursions into Palestinian areas--was unlikely to work,(16) this strategy produced substantial results. While terror organizations conducted attacks on a near daily basis in the first three months of 2002--sometimes even two a day--these Israeli offensives crippled their infrastructure and reduced their ability to

conduct terror attacks. By the time of the elections, Israeli forces were thwarting between 15 and 40 attempted attacks for every one that succeeded.

5) Economically, it was clear that three major problems were taking a heavy toll but none were blamed on the government. The first was the inevitable effect of the intifada on foreign investment and the tourism sector, both important sources of foreign currency and employment. The second setback was the worldwide recession, especially affecting the high-tech sector--which had driven Israel's economic growth in the 1990s. Third, facing one of the worst recessions in the country's history, combined with significant inflation and a fear of worse to come, most voters understood that painful budget cutbacks were required. Indeed, while similar economic crises in other countries have often produced opposition politicians who decry government budget cuts and promise to increase spending, such populist rhetoric was entirely absent in this election.(17)

This is not to suggest that people were happy with the cutbacks or felt government policy to be right on every issue. In particular, Finance Minister Silvan Shalom produced a series of budget proposals based on unrealistic growth estimates, while the Bank of Israel's governor, David Klein was foolishly persuaded to reduce interest rates--two mistakes that proved disastrous for the economy. Yet, most experts placed the blame for these mistakes on Shalom (who was replaced after the election) and Klein. Most importantly, a majority of voters recognized that the most critical factors causing the difficult economic situation were outside of the government's control.

Beyond the fact that few people saw any good alternatives to Sharon's policies, another reason Sharon won was that he made several significant moves to signal to the public that he truly represents the Israeli moderate consensus in dealing with the Palestinians, even if

the foreign press was intent on labeling his positions "hardline."(18) One prominent move was his consistent call for another national unity government, despite Labor having abandoned the previous one. Sharon also refused to bend to the right-wing National Union (NU) party's demand in November 2002 to create a truly hardline government. Sharon continued this policy after the elections by promising not to invite the NU to be part of the coalition--unless it agreed to all coalition guidelines.

Most convincing were Sharon's repeated statements about accepting the Bush Administration's "road map" (which 59 percent of Israelis support),(19) and his readiness to make "painful concessions" in negotiations, including the formation of a Palestinian state. While many commentators found these words hollow, in standing by these positions in front of his hardline Likud central committee months before elections had even been announced, Sharon demonstrated a degree of commitment that convinced many voters that his stance on the issue was genuine.

#### *How Mitzna and Labor Lost the Elections*

Still another reason for Sharon's massive victory was that the Labor party sabotaged itself very effectively and drove away moderate swing voters. As *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman summed up:

[Another reason Sharon will win] is the failure of Israel's Labor party to develop an alternative to the Sharon policy.... [Mitzna's problem] is not that he is advocating what 70 percent of Israelis want--separation from the Palestinians and giving up most of the settlements. Rather it is that he has not persuaded Israelis, on a gut level, that he and his party are tough enough to bring this about in a safe way.(20)

Mitzna's failure of persuasion rested mainly with his proposed path for achieving the end goal of separation.(21) His approach even convinced many Israelis who had supported past Labor candidates and major concessions to the Palestinians that electing him would be dangerous for the country's security. That proposed path included at least four electorally disastrous elements.

First, Mitzna said he would "fight terror as if there were no negotiations, and negotiate as if there was no terror." However, this slogan was seen by most Israelis as reversing Israel's historic policy, including that adopted by Mitzna's own Labor party predecessors, as well as abandoning one of Israel's main points of leverage. Moreover, the problem of terrorism was not merely that it provoked emotional reactions by Israelis, but that they saw it was an important indication of the perceptions, strategy and goals of the Palestinian leadership which could not be ignored.

Continuing to battle the tide of Israeli consensus, Mitzna stated his willingness to negotiate with Arafat, saying that it was for Israelis to decide who would be their leader and for the Palestinians to decide who would be theirs. Yet, the PA's ruler had lost all credibility among Israelis since the failure of Camp David in July 2000, with the majority also considering him responsible for the outbreak of the intifada. Even Yossi Sarid, head of the left-wing Meretz party, had publicly given up on negotiating with Arafat.(22) Even outside of Israel, U.S. policy at the time saw Arafat as a barrier to peace and Arafat's standing in Europe and even in the Arab world was at one of its lowest points. Therefore, most swing voters saw Mitzna's idea as a giant step backward at a time when pressure was on the Palestinians to find a more moderate leadership.

The third aspect of Mitzna's platform that troubled many voters (and which Likud ads used effectively against him) was his willingness to begin the

negotiations from the point at which the parties had left off at Taba. While most Israelis believe that Israel had already offered all it could, Mitzna was clearly signaling an intention to go beyond that limit. The Likud credibly suggested that Mitzna was willing to offer the return of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees into Israel--a notion even rejected by several outspoken peace activists like Amos Oz and David Grossman.(23)

Finally, Mitzna promised that his first priority as prime minister (even before negotiations began) would be to withdraw unilaterally from the Gaza Strip and immediately dismantle all settlements there. Moreover, even should negotiations fail, Mitzna intended to withdraw unilaterally from the West Bank. While the proposition of unilateral withdrawal was already controversial, Israelis regarded Mitzna's proposal as a surefire strategy for future negotiations to fail, as it gave the Palestinians no incentive to make any reciprocal concessions or even diminish the level of violence.

On all these points, Mitzna had lost so much credibility that his declaration only a few weeks before the election that he would not join a unity government under any circumstances simply became one more position undercutting his own support.(24) After all, one of the main rationales for swing voters--or those with doubts about Mitzna's stance--would be that a stronger Labor party might join a coalition and moderate Sharon. But once voters were presented with an all-or-nothing option regarding Mitzna, most did not hesitate to choose the latter alternative.

But if Mitzna's positions were so divergent from the present Israeli consensus, why did the Labor party membership choose a candidate so obviously unable to win the swing vote, and so in a sense, forfeit the election? The question is especially pertinent considering that the party primaries were

held only two months before the general election, thus leaving Mitzna with insufficient time to moderate his positions in order to capture the political center.

One of the key reasons for Mitzna's victory in the primaries was suggested by a poll taken for the Israeli TV talk show "Politika" on the eve of Labor's primaries. About 60 percent of party members favored remaining in the opposition after the general elections as opposed to the 28 percent who felt that Labor should re-enter a national unity government.(25) It seems that the core of Labor supporters were not aiming to win the 2003 election, but rather voted according to what they considered to be in the long-term interest of the party. With the Labor party struggling for survival, its members decided that the party's only chance to recover was to ensure that it developed a unique policy alternative, and thus regain their political identity--even if that meant spending four years in opposition. Yoel Marcus remarked that Mitzna's support in the primaries showed that party members "are sick of trailing after the Likud... [and] want an alternative."(26)

During the nearly two years spent as a junior partner in the Likud-led government, Labor was unable to mobilize its own supporters or put forward an alternative policy. Moreover, the coalition government was entangled with the party leadership struggle, since Benyamin Ben-Eliezer, Labor's leader, got along well with Sharon and represented this partnership strategy.(27) Many also found that, while Ariel Sharon had the final say on policy, as members of the coalition the party shared in the responsibility for government policy, leaving Labor without the ability to criticize its rival's failures. At the same time, ironically, the more Labor influenced the government and moderated Sharon's positions, the more it strengthened his power and general popularity. While Ben-Eliezer's stance

kept it in government, unless the party made a major change it would never have a chance of leading a government.(28)

Another major element of Mitzna's victory in the primaries was that, in contrast to the well-known figures of Labor's left-wing, who had little or no chance of winning an election, Mitzna at least represented something new. He was an outsider to national politics, even though he was the sitting mayor of Haifa for the past eight years. The attempts of his rivals in the party primaries to portray him as a political novice (they used the army term "*tiron*," meaning the rank of private) backfired. With the current polls showing that Sharon would win in any case, the party's voters could afford to take a chance and think in terms of finding a new, long-term leadership.(29)

This did not mean that Labor would inevitably lose by a huge margin. Mitzna's mistakes did matter. For example, only a week before the general elections, one poll found that if veteran Labor politician and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres had been running at the head of the Labor list, the party would have received 29 mandates instead of 19.(30) While Shimon Peres always does best in elections he is not running in,(31) the poll did demonstrate that voters were repulsed by the specific candidate the party was fielding for the premiership at least as much as they were disenchanted with the party itself.

#### *A Loss for the Extreme Right as well*

The aspect of the 2003 election most commonly overlooked was that the losers were not only on the left but on the extreme right as well.(32) Having always fiercely opposed the Oslo accords and rejected yielding captured territory--claiming it would lead to the type of violence that did occur--the extreme right expected the rightward swing of many Israeli voters would also strengthen their numbers.

Instead, many rightist voters rallied for a more centrist national unity

position. First, the Herut (Freedom) party headed by Michael Kleiner--whose slogans were "It's us or them" and "Only by force"--failed even to pass the 1.5 percent threshold required to enter the Knesset.(33) Another indication was that the next most extreme party, the National Union, actually lost one mandate in the 2003 elections. Finally, Netanyahu's resounding defeat in the Likud primaries (losing to Sharon by a 16 percent margin) was also a loss for the far right, as Netanyahu had campaigned on a platform closely resembling that of the National Union, namely no Palestinian state and the immediate expulsion of Arafat.

In fact, this election actually added credence to what numerous opinion polls had already demonstrated: the rightward swing of many Israelis was only half of a two-part phenomenon. The second half was that, in terms of their positions regarding a permanent solution to the conflict with the Palestinians, many parts of Israeli society have actually swung leftwards. A telling indication of this larger trend is that a plurality of Likud party members (not central committee members) now supports the emergence of a Palestinian state.(34)

A second indication is that while many Israelis were once largely indifferent to the settlements, most are now unsympathetic: 62 percent are willing to dismantle most settlements in a peace agreement (up from 38 percent two years ago); a clear majority believes in freezing settlement expansion; and 70 percent of Israelis support tough governmental policy against extreme Israeli elements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, even if this results in a confrontation with settlers (53 percent believe that the Israeli government is not strict enough in this regard).(35)

### **THE DEMISE OF SECTARIAN PARTIES**

Israeli politics have always involved divisions across three issues: the debate over the Arab-Israeli conflict,(36) there

are also the religious-secular and communal divides.(37) While the 1999 elections had brought sectarian-based parties (specifically those representing Sephardi Jews and recent Russian-speaking immigrants) to their highest level of influence ever, the 2003 elections dealt a harsh blow to these same parties.(38)

The hardest hit in the 2003 elections were the numerous parties which sought to represent recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. With over 1 million people having immigrated to Israel from the former USSR since 1987 (making them one-sixth of the total population), there had arisen several distinctly Russian parties, three of which had representatives in the Knesset after the 1999 elections. In 2003, none of the new Russian parties attracted nearly enough support to pass the 1.5 percent threshold, and all three parties that had been in the previous Knesset disappeared, having merged with parties that shared their views on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the far right, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu ("Israel is our home") joined with the National Union during the course of the previous term. On the far left, Roman Bronfman's Democratic Choice party, which had previously split from Yisrael biAliya, merged into Meretz during the election campaign.(39) Yisrael biAliya itself, led by Natan Sharansky, only managed to win two seats and joined with the Likud two weeks after the election.

One might suggest that these mergers represent the beginning of this group's absorption into Israeli society. More likely, however, is that these parties found it politically necessary to merge with other parties to retain influence in the Knesset at all. The poor electoral performance of these parties was partially due to the renewed Palestinian-Israeli violence, which pushed more of the electorate to vote along security rather than sectarian lines. An equally important factor was that the election law--which

since 1996 had given the public one vote for prime minister and another for the legislature--had reverted to its previous form of one vote for one party. While many had previously availed themselves of the chance to cast one vote for prime minister, based on national--i.e., security--issues, and a second based on sectarian considerations, this option was no longer available.

This change, brought about in large measure due to concern that too many small parties were making it hard and costly to assemble a ruling coalition, had a significant impact on the elections. It strengthened bigger parties at the expense of smaller ones, as Labor and Likud combined gained 10 percent more seats in 2003 than in 1999. It also caused a drop in both the number of parties running for Knesset (31 in 1999 versus 26 in 2003)(40) and the number of parties in the Knesset (15 parties elected in 1999 and 19 when dissolved versus 12 at present).(41)

These same factors were similarly detrimental for Shas--the Sephardi Orthodox-led party that had probably benefited more than any other from the previous two-ballot system. Most of its voters were Likud supporters, but as these voters were able to cast ballots for both parties under the old system, they had given Shas an ever increasing number of mandates: 6 mandates in 1992, 10 in 1996, 17 in 1999. In 2003, however, the party dropped down to 11 mandates, capturing only 8 percent of the vote (as opposed to 13 percent in 1999).

From the perspective of Shas's leadership, however, things could have turned out much worse. The last four years had created an unbridgeable rift between the party's spiritual guide Ovadia Yosef and its former charismatic leader Ariele Deri (who spent most of those years in prison for a bribery conviction), leaving Deri out of politics. This rift also forced out most of the major figures who had supported Deri within Shas. As a result, these supporters created

a rival party called "Ahavat Yisrael" (Love of Israel) under the spiritual guidance of the 100-year-old Kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri.(42) Competing for precisely the same votes, Ahavat Yisrael was considered a major threat that could divide support for Shas.

The outlook for Shas was so bad that, at the beginning of the election campaign, most polls predicted it would end up with only 8 Knesset seats. It appears that what saved Shas from an even more humiliating defeat was Ahavat Yisrael's failure to rally sufficient support, the corruption scandal that erupted following the Likud primaries, and the rise of Shinui (below), which triggered a counter-reaction.

### **THE RISE OF SHINUI**

Yet for one small party, even the intifada and the change in election laws was insufficient to thwart its appeal. Apart from the Likud, the only other clear winner in the 2003 elections was Shinui (Change), a secular party led by former journalist Yosef "Tommy" Lapid. From the 6 mandates it won in 1999, the party multiplied its representation in 2003 to 15, becoming the Knesset's third largest party.(43)

What was the secret to Shinui's spectacular success? Like Shas in the previous election, the meteoric rise of Shinui is best explained as the political manifestation of underlying social discontent; in this case, discontent that had been gaining in intensity since the early 1990s.

One long-standing issue is the commonly held view that ultra-Orthodox people do not bear their proper share of the national burden. As part of an agreement since the founding of the state, Israel has exempted Haredi yeshiva (Jewish seminary) students from serving in the army. If students leave the yeshiva to work, however, their exemptions are no longer valid; therefore, most choose to continue their studies and are subsequently supported by the state. In



addition, the Haredi sector is provided with its own separate school system, one that trains its youth for religious studies but does not bestow the tools necessary for taking an active role in the economy (such as English, math, or computer skills).

When the number of Haredim (the plural of Haredi) was small, the inequality could be overlooked. However, as the Haredi population has grown, so too has the number of youth receiving exemptions and the amounts of money allocated to the Haredi sector, which produces proportionately little in tax revenue. This, in turn, greatly angered many secular Israelis, who have to spend several years on active military duty (and in reserve duty afterwards), suffer more casualties, and pay more in taxes in order to support the lifestyle of the Haredim.

In fact, while other small parties suffered from the worsening security and economic situation, in Shinui's case, it appears to have helped the party significantly. With the non-Haredi sectors having to bear the brunt of the mounting security and financial burden, Shinui tapped into the discontent of the middle classes who found themselves serving huge amounts of reserve duty on the one hand and squeezed financially by the recession and tax burden on the other. While there had been resentment for the Haredi sector before the intifada began, the inequity has simply become unbearable for many since.

Another source of secular discontent is what secular Israelis refer to as "*kfiyah datit*" (religious coercion)--especially laws which mandate, for example, that most stores are closed and that there is no public transportation on the Sabbath. In addition, all areas of personal status (marriage, divorce, and burial) are outside of civil jurisdiction, and are handled instead by each religion's official bodies. Yet, a significant proportion of Israelis despise being forced to accept these religious dictates. Instead of the status quo, this section of society

generally advocates a separation of religion and state, something along the lines of the American model.

The two most comprehensive surveys on the religious behavior and beliefs of Israeli Jews (carried out in 1991 and 1999) demonstrated widespread public support for most of Shinui's main proposals:

- drafting yeshiva students (85-90 percent say "yes" and "definitely yes");
- public transportation on the Sabbath (63-65 percent say "yes" and "definitely yes");
- institution of civil marriage (43-49 percent say "yes" and "definitely yes", although only 15 percent say they would get married solely in a civil service);
- cutting government funding for the Ministry of Religious Affairs (39 percent say "yes" and "definitely yes").(44)

The inability of the traditional secular party, Meretz, to bring about any change on these issues led many voters to abandon it for Shinui. Since Meretz vowed never to join a Likud-led government, it was also sure to remain powerless and in opposition post elections. As opposed to Meretz, Shinui successfully portrayed itself as a truly centrist party on security issues (i.e., more moderate than Labor for those who thought that party had gone too far to the left) and as a defender of middle class interests.

After the 2003 election, Shinui was easily able to reach an agreement with the National Religious party (NRP)--which represents the Orthodox nationalist sector and has its own rivalry with the Haredi parties--and join a government led by Sharon. The question will be whether it can fulfill its promises and become a long-term major party or whether it will prove to be a temporary phenomenon.

Shinui's sweeping victory created enormous expectations from its voters, such that a failure to implement its platform could bring its downfall.(45)

On the other hand, should Shinui be too successful--especially on certain sensitive issues--the backlash could drive away traditional or religious voters from the Likud. Accordingly, Sharon must be careful, agreeing to implement changes where there is a broad consensus but not going so far as to alienate elements of his own party.

It is interesting to note that in response to the unpopularity of the Haredim, as well as long-term structural changes within the community, United Torah Judaism (UTJ, an Ashkenazi Haredi party) has begun moving toward a more Zionist position, which represents nothing less than a quiet ideological revolution. For example, despite its historic explicit denunciation of Jewish statehood, the UTJ's campaign slogan in the 2003 elections was "The difference between a plain, ordinary (*stam*) state and a Jewish state." A second indicator is that in its failed coalition negotiations with the Likud, the UTJ agreed for the first time to take a ministerial post instead of merely the chairmanship of a parliamentary committee.(46) In the future, the more the Hardei parties will feel they are losing the conflict with Shinui, the more likely this change will accelerate.

Another noteworthy shift is the larger role of women in high political roles, a situation largely brought about by an increasing number of parties using primaries to determine their candidates and leadership. Traditionally, the number of female members in parliament hovered between 8 and 10. But in the Knesset elected in 1999 there were 16 female MKs (Members of Knesset), and in 2003, that number rose to 18 women.(47) This trend even forced the religious parties to grapple more seriously with the issue. For example, for the first time the National Religious Party reserved a realistic place

for a woman candidate on its list. While Shas is still not ready to cross that line, it did feel the need to hold a highly publicized gathering for the female supporters of the party--a gathering that emphasized over and over again that women do have a strong influence in Shas, even if it is behind the scenes. The shift has also been felt on the ministerial level, as Sharon's previous government included a record high of three women ministers and two deputy ministers.(48)

### **THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT**

Though the Likud party won a tremendous victory in the election, the party needed to find coalition partners with 21 seats in order to have the 61 required to form a government. How Sharon chose to form his government and the coalition agreement the parties signed are indicative of its likely policy priorities (see Table 3 below).(49)

Aside from managing the conflict with the Palestinians, Sharon has to handle two key issues: improving the economy and altering the status of the Haredim. In order to make progress in either area, Sharon could not form a coalition with either Shas or UTJ. Sharon was also unwilling to repeat his previous mistake of allowing the UTJ to chair the powerful Knesset Finance Committee, a move that had allowed it to extort extra funds by threatening to hold up the budget.

At the same time, Sharon was unwilling to form a government completely devoid of religious parties. Accordingly, the first agreement he initialed was with the NRP. Though after the election Mitzna had showed some signs of backtracking on his promise not to join a coalition, it was clearly not his preference, and he was likely to agree only if the Likud would concede to nearly all of Labor's demands. Even should Sharon acquiesce, due to its internal resistance to sitting in a unity government (see above), Labor was almost certain to be a highly unreliable partner. Given this

predicament, Sharon had little incentive to keep out parties that took uncompromising positions on negotiations with the Palestinians. In addition, once Sharon had a religious party, he could more easily turn to Shinui, which was eager for progress on both the economic and religious fronts. While these two parties gave Sharon a 61-seat government, he decided to initial an agreement with the National Union for added leverage should the NRP prove a hesitant partner.

From this base, the coalition has a chance to succeed on four immediate issues:

- Cancellation of a law giving preference to large families, designed to provide added subsidies to the Haredim (whose population growth rates are the highest in Israel).
- Dismantling the Religious Affairs ministry, with many of its powers moving to the Interior Ministry's jurisdiction.
- Repealing the "Tal Law" which continued the large-scale deferment of yeshiva students.(50)
- A massive tax and privatization reform to reduce the public sector, lighten the tremendous tax burden, and stimulate the economy.

In tandem with such moves, the new government will try to cut the budget and relieve some of the secular public's discontent, which could also involve alterations in laws regarding personal status, especially marriage. Addressing other issues on which he has been criticized, Sharon forced Silvan Shalom from the Finance Ministry, replacing him with Netanyahu (a move also designed to undercut his principal rival by giving him a tough, unpopular job that removes him from security issues) and ordered the construction of at least 160 kilometers of

fence in the West Bank, covering about half the border there.(51)

The issue where the current government cannot make substantial progress is towards peace, though here the voters' expectations are low. If this question does come back to center stage, though, Sharon is in a position to accept a settlement freeze in practice, as he has already done in principle. The NRP and National Union might threaten to leave the government in this situation, though Sharon might be able to avoid this outcome.

If, however, more far-reaching negotiations with the Palestinians are able to resume, presumably following a real cease-fire and perhaps accompanied by Arafat's weakening or replacement, Sharon would need to convince Labor to enter another national unity government to be able to deliver on negotiation promises. While Labor currently assures Sharon that it will provide a safety net from outside the government, under these circumstances the pressure from the public and party members would likely push Labor to rejoin the coalition.

If the Palestinians were to make a serious and credible effort to achieve a compromise peace, Israeli public opinion would shift accordingly. Sharon will have to respond to any opportunities, but given his own credibility across the political spectrum, he would be in a good position to do so--if he could overcome his own ideological convictions. Conversely, should the Palestinians refuse to rein in terrorism and end the intifada, he will likely continue to enjoy his current levels of support.

Of course, a key factor here is Sharon's age: How many years will he be able to continue as prime minister? For the current political balances of power are very much dependent on his presence. Netanyahu would be the most likely successor, though he is generally a much more polarizing figure. Additionally, Sharon has tried to strengthen several of

his rivals, most prominently Ehud Olmert, the former mayor of Jerusalem.

Finally, it is also important not to discount Labor's long-term prospects. Just as the Likud--devastated in the 1999 elections and also left with only 19 mandates--was able to make a tremendous comeback when circumstances changed, so too could Labor return from the abyss. As the previous point suggests, that change in circumstances seems to lie largely in Palestinian hands.

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## NOTES

1. Knesset website:

<[http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng\\_mimshal\\_res.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res.htm)>. In 1996, while Labor retained more parliament seats than did Likud, it lost the election for prime minister, and thus is considered to have lost that election.

2. *Yediot Ahronot*, November 8, 2002; *Ma'ariv*, November 15, 2002. For all of the developments and rises and falls of each party during the campaign season--the original polls were largely accurate.

3. Yoel Marcus, "Everybody Loves Arik," *Ha'aretz*, November 12, 2002. This article is only one of several where Marcus voiced his frustration with Sharon's impending re-election. An example of foreign commentary along very similar lines can be found in a *New York Times* editorial the day after the election, "Ariel Sharon's Paradoxical Victory," January 29, 2003

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/29/opinion/29WED3.html>>.

4. For statistical evidence, see Asher Arian, *Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2002*, Memorandum No. 61, July 2002 (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2002), pp. 11-15. <<http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo61.pdf>>

5. For right wing voters--the most important category for the primaries. Even amongst the general public, the two ran basically neck and neck. A collection of polls with these questions can be found at:

<<http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=1938>>.

6. Extensive coverage of the event can be found in all the major papers: *Ma'ariv*, *Yediot Ahronot*, *Ha'aretz*, and *Jerusalem Post* for May 13, 2002. The conclusion of most commentators was that Sharon had gambled and lost, and that Netanyahu had emerged stronger within the Likud.

7. In a December 2002 poll, 47 percent of Palestinians said that the goal of the intifada is to liberate all of historic Palestine, as opposed to 46 percent which said its goal is to end the Israeli military occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state based on UN Security Council resolution 242. It is of interest to note that the percent which sees the intifada as a battle for all of historic Palestine has risen about 8 percent since December 2001. Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, "On Palestinian Attitudes Towards the Palestinian Situation in General, December 2002" JMCC Public Opinion Poll No. 47 <<http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2002/no47.htm#results>>.

8. A 2002 survey showed that 68 percent of Israelis thought it impossible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians. In fact, only 26 percent thought that signing peace treaties would mean an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, compared to 30 percent in 2001, 45 percent in 2000, and 67 percent in 1999. Arian, *Israeli Public*

*Opinion on National Security 2002*, pp. 10, 16-17.

9. According to a poll taken by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace immediately following the breakdown of the Camp David talks, 57 percent of Israelis held that Barak had compromised too much. <<http://truman.huji.ac.il/poll-dec2001.htm>>

10. Specific polls on the subject of public support varied, in part depending on the period asked, which organization was conducting the polling, and most importantly, the specific polling question asked. When the number of terrorist attacks climaxed in the spring of 2002, support for unilateral separation neared 60 percent, though only when asked about withdrawal from 80 percent of the West Bank while annexing 80 percent of the settler population (*Ma'ariv*, April 12, 2002). In periods of relative calm or when asked about a full withdrawal from the West Bank, the amount of support was always below half (*Yedioth Ahronot*, May 4, 2002; and Arian, *Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2002*, p. 26).

Mark Heller made an important point when he said that the support for unilateral separation was largely support for the idea in principle only, as "the same polls also show the majority breaking down before any attempt to translate the principle into a concrete line on the ground." Mark A Heller, "The Challenges Facing Israel's Peace Candidate," *Observer*, January 5, 2003 <<http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,869095,00.html>>.

11. While likely to hear these arguments from political conservatives or the military, these ideas were certainly not limited to them. For instance, peace activist and author David Grossman wrote, "Last month in London, I heard Yasir Abed Rabbo, the Palestinian information minister, say in a conversation with Israelis from the peace camp that if Israel withdraws behind a

fence, Palestinians will spend a day celebrating that most of the occupation has ended, and the next day will continue the intifada, in order to obtain the rest of their demands.... In fact, Palestinians may fight more fiercely if they feel their terror has forced Israel into a new ghetto." David Grossman, "Illusions of a Separate Peace," *New York Times*, July 12, 2002

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/12/opinion/12GROS.html>>.

12. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, "Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion Poll - November 2002, Summary of Results." <<http://truman.huji.ac.il/poll-nov2002.htm>>

13. Poll taken from the Israeli TV show "Politika," January 7, 2003.

14. The topic of building a fence the entire length of the Green Line figured prominently in Labor's election advertisement campaign (*ta'amulat bichivot*).

15. There were several additional reasons why more punishing policies were not supported by most Israelis: 1) very few Israelis are anxious to resume a full, permanent occupation of either the West Bank or the Gaza Strip; 2) Israelis understand that international opinion is against any extreme Israeli retaliation, with the threat of UN condemnation, or worse yet, limited economic sanctions by several European countries hovering overhead; and 3) most Israelis believe in retaining the moral high ground.

One of the ideas raised by the extreme right is transferring part of the Palestinian population to Jordan. Though lately there has been a slight rise in the percent of Israelis supporting the notion of transfer, a clear majority disagrees with the idea. See for instance, Arian, *Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2002*, pp. 27-30.

16. This included the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1402.

<<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/SC7348.doc.htm>>

In Kofi Annan's statement at the time, after condemning the Palestinian terror attacks, saying they would bring them no closer to establishing a Palestinian state, he went on to condemn the Israeli response: "Yet, I have also consistently voiced criticism over Israel's use of disproportionate lethal force, especially in civilian populated areas in response to these attacks. Such use of force will bring neither peace nor security to Israel."

<<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/sgsm8182.doc.htm>>.

17. If anything, the watchword of these elections--from the day they were announced--was "national responsibility" (*ahriyut leumit*).

18. See, for instance, "Labor Party Continues Slide in Polls a Week Before Election," Associated Press, January 20, 2003.

19. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, "Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion Poll - November 2002, Summary of Results."

20. Thomas Friedman, "The New Math," *New York Times*, January 15, 2003. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/15/opinion/15FRIE.html>>

21. Mitzna himself seemed to misdiagnose Israeli reluctance to follow him: "People are in fear -- they are in a psychology of shock," Mr. Mitzna told me as we rode around one morning. "They have lost confidence that you are able to negotiate with the other side, so they stick to what they know--even if it is not working. What I am trying to bring is logic and the truth, but people are thinking from their guts." Thomas Friedman, "Israel Waits for Godot," *New York Times*, January 19, 2003. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/19/opinion/19FRIE.html>>.

22. *Ma'ariv*, June 21, 2002. Sarid said that "I have simply come to the

conclusion that there is no connection between what Arafat tells me in conversation and what takes place afterwards in reality..." and concluded that any further negotiations with Arafat would be "a waste of time."

<<http://images.maariv.co.il/cache/cachearchive/21062002/ART308778.html>>

23. Oz wrote in an op-ed in July 2000:

Now [Arafat] demands that the Palestinian exiles should return not only to Palestine, but also to Israel, thus upsetting the demographic balance and eventually turning Israel into the 26th Arab country.... The Palestinians have a right to their own free and independent Palestine. But if they also want to have Israel, they should know that they will find me ready to defend my country: an old peace activist ready to fight for the survival of Israel.

Amos Oz, "Specter of Saladin," *New York Times*, July 28, 2000.

For David Grossman on the refugee issue, see especially "A Heart Aches as Peace Slips Away" *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2001

<<http://www.opentent.org/essays/grossman2.html>>.

24. *Ma'ariv*, January 9, 2003

<<http://images.maariv.co.il/cache/cachearchive/09012003/ART414766.html>>

and January 16, 2003

<<http://images.maariv.co.il/cache/cachearchive/16012003/ART418927.html>>. The polls show a slight drop, from 22 to 19 mandates. In other words, Labor was clearly going to lose the elections well before the announcement. Moreover, it is very difficult to claim that Mitzna's announcement was even the primary reason for this small downward slide. A more important factor was that accusations of corruption, which had plagued the Likud for weeks, had spread to Labor as well. For instance, a *Ha'aretz* poll conducted at the same time found that 48.6 percent of Israelis believed

Likud and Labor were comparably corrupt; 26.1 percent believed Likud was more corrupt, and 10.9 percent thought Labor was more corrupt. (*Ha'aretz*, January 16, 2003). <<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=252480&contrastID=1&subContrastID=0&sbSubContrastID=0>>.

25. Marketwatch and Politika poll, November 19, 2002.

26. Yoel Marcus "Bluffing Time is Over," *Ha'aretz*, November 8, 2002.

27. Although Ben-Eliezer did pull Labor out of the coalition in November 2002, it was clearly a move he was forced into taking, as he was trailing in the upcoming Labor party primaries (only a few weeks away) and the majority of Labor voters disagreed with Ben-Eliezer's strategy. If the move had been genuine, it would have come earlier and Ben-Eliezer would not have pushed Mitzna to re-enter a unity government following the elections.

28. Haim Ramon, the other contender for the position of chairman, actually was one of the first to offer many of the alternative positions that Mitzna held. To his detriment, Ramon has created a great deal of resentment within the Labor party for his past actions, and simply lacks charisma and often comes off poorly on television interviews. Moreover, as a younger politician, he also lacks the stature of a national leader, someone capable of assuming the massive burden of the premiership.

29. See for instance, *Yediot Ahronot*, November 8, 2002.

30. *Ma'ariv*, January 20, 2003

<<http://images.maariv.co.il/cache/cachearchive/20012003/ART421525.html>>.

31. For an excellent overview of this phenomenon, see Yossi Verter "Peres Effect' strikes again," *Ha'aretz*, January 21, 2003.

32. One of the very few to notice was Efraim Inbar. See: "Winning the Center," *Jerusalem Post*, February 9, 2003.

33. The party's name, the original name of what is now the Likud--illustrated its

view that Sharon's party had betrayed its traditional positions.

34. It is important to note that this support is not automatic. For instance, when Likud supporters are asked if they "support or oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state" only about 30 percent say they support. When asked this same question "assuming the terror stops and Arafat doesn't rule the Palestinian Authority anymore," then Likud support reaches nearly 50 percent. *Ma'ariv*, December 6, 2002. In fact, under those same conditions, a plurality of Likud voters (47 percent) also support the evacuation of all the settlements in the Gaza Strip.

35. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, "Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion Poll - November 2002, Summary of Results."

36. Many Middle East experts comment about the enormous role the Arab-Israeli Conflict plays in the discourse of Arab countries, and how much the political processes of those countries get weighed down (and the necessary democratic reforms get postponed) by the constant attention given to the conflict. It is worth noting that a similar process has occurred in Israeli politics, shown by the fact that since the beginning of Zionist politics, most parties have first and foremost been defined by their stance towards the Arabs, and only then by their stances on all other issues.

37. I refer to this as communal rather than ethnic, as "Jewish" is considered by most Israeli Jews to be their overarching ethnic identity, followed by their "aida" (community). While the recent Russian immigration would usually fall under the Ashkenazi category, their status in Israel is significantly different than that of most other Ashkenazi groups, due to their numbers and general lack of integration.

38. For an overview analysis of the 1999 elections, see Barry Rubin, "Israel's Election and New Government

Coalition,” MERIA News, Vol. 3, Issue 7 (June 1999)

<<http://meria.idc.ac.il/news/1999/99news7.html>>.

39. See *Jerusalem Post*, November 25, 2002. The party’s leader was given the number 5 spot on the Meretz list, thus virtually guaranteeing him a seat in the Knesset, whereas had the party run alone, it was unlikely to have passed the 1.5 percent threshold.

40. David Magen’s Center Party officially announced it was withdrawing two days before the 2003 elections, though official tallies still included the party.

41. Especially given the power that Sharon wielded in conducting coalition negotiations, *Ha’aretz* columnist Uzi Benziman seems to have underrated the change: “Yesterday’s vote shows, among other things, that the return to the single ballot system has not met expectations: Contrary to the predictions of the instigators of the current electoral system, the 16th Knesset has failed to create two large parties, equal in power; it has not significantly cut the number of factions and it has not strengthened the ruling ability of the elected government.” Uzi Benziman, “Was Returning to the Single Ballot System a Mistake?” *Ha’aretz*, January 29, 2003. Of course, it is an inane thought that any system should necessarily create two parties equal in power.

42. For more on the party, see Avirama Golan, “Party Backed by Rabbi Kedourie Announces Political Platform,” *Ha’aretz*, November 19, 2002.

43. Shinui had actually been a party elected to the Knesset in 1981, 1984, and 1988, but had disappeared until Lapid’s takeover in 1999.

44. Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn, and Elihu Katz, *Beliefs and Observance of Jewish Traditions and Values, 2000* (Jerusalem: Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, 2002), pp. 21-24 and Appendix A, pp. 10-12. See also Shlomit Levy, Hanna

Levinsohn, and Elihu Katz, *Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews* (Jerusalem: Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, December 1993).

45. Since the signing of the coalition agreement, there have already been several signs of this disappointment, for instance: Moti Dinus, “When Tommy betrayed me,” *Yediot Ahronot*, February 25, 2003; and “Editorial: Where’s the change?” *Ha’aretz*, February 24, 2003.

46. *Ha’aretz*, February 21, 2003.

47. For the list of current women members, see the Knesset website: <[http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mkin dex\\_current\\_eng.asp?view=3](http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mkin dex_current_eng.asp?view=3)>.

For essays on previous representation, see R. Werczberger, “The Advancement of the Status of Women - Israel 2001” <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0kdq0>> and MK Naomi Chazan, “Women in Public Life” <[http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Society\\_&\\_Culture/Women\\_in\\_public\\_life.html](http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/Women_in_public_life.html)>.

48. The ministers were in Education, Industry and Trade and Regional Development, the deputy ministers were in National Infrastructure and Defense.

49. The government’s basic guidelines can be found at: (Hebrew version) <<http://www.pm.gov.il/ts.exe?tsurl=0.46.0.0.0&tsstmplt=guide>> (English version) <<http://www.pmo.gov.il/english/ts.exe?tsurl=0.25.0.0.0&tsstmplt=guide>>

50. With a non-military alternative available, this could easily be applied to Arab-Israelis as well. Such a move has the potential to drastically improve the tarnished relations between the State and its Arab citizens, as they would then become equally eligible for the numerous benefits granted to veterans of military or national service.

51. *Ha’aretz*, March 6, 2003. <<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/269951.html>>

52. *Ma’ariv*, *Yediot Ahronot*, and *Ha’aretz*, January 30, 31, 2003. There were a few alterations in the number of mandates made after the votes of all



soldiers and foreign diplomats were counted, which gave Likud and NRP an additional seat each, at the expense of One Nation and Hadash.

53. Percentage of votes come from the Knesset website: <<http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections16/eng/results/regions.asp>>. Surplus vote agreements meant that number of mandates do not strictly accord with the percentage of votes received. The following parties signed such agreements: Labor with Meretz, Shinui with Greens, National Union with Yisrael biAliya, NRP with Am Ehad, Shas with UTJ, and

Hadash with Balad. The qualifying threshold (1.5%) from all valid votes is 47,226 votes. The number of votes per mandate is 25,138.

54. *Yediot Ahronot*, January 30, 2003, "24 Hours" supplement, p. 2. These results and all of *Yediot Ahronot's* election coverage can be found at <<http://www.ynet.co.il/home/0,7340,L-1863,00.html>>.

**Table 1: General Election Results (number of mandates in parentheses is from 1999 election)**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Mandates(52)</b>	<b>Percent of Vote(53)</b>
Likud*	38 (19)	29.39
Avodah-Meimad (Labor)	19 (26)	14.46
Shinui (Change)	15 (6)	12.28
Shas	11 (17)	8.22
National Union (NU-HaIchud HaLeumi)	7 (8)	5.53
Meretz	6 (10)	5.21
National Religious Party (NRP-Mafdal)	6 (5)	4.20
United Torah Judaism (UTJ)	5 (5)	4.29
One Nation (Am Ehad)	3 (2)	2.76
Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash)	3 (3)	2.98
National Democratic Assembly (Balad)	3 (2)	2.26
Yisrael biAliya (Israel by Immigration)*	2 (6)	2.15
United Arab List (Ra'am)	2 (5)	2.08
Others under 1.5%**	0 (6)	4.18
Total	120	99.99%

\*Yisrael biAliya merged with Likud after the elections (February 7, 2003), giving the Likud and additional 2 mandates (totaling 40 seats).

\*\*Other parties who did not pass the 1.5% threshold:

Ahavat Yisrael (0.17%), Center (0.06%), Citizen and State (0.05%), Democratic Action Organization (0.06%), Green Leaf (Ale Yarok) (1.20%), Greens (Hayerukim) (0.41%), Herut (1.15%), Lahava (0.04%), Leeder (0.03%), Men's Rights in the Family (Ra-ash) (0.04%), Progressive National Alliance (0.65%), Tzomet (0.06%), Yisrael Aheret (0.23%), Za-am - Social Justice (0.03%)

**Table 2: The Demographic Breakdown of the Election Results (by percent)(54)**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Tel-Aviv</b>	<b>Haifa</b>	<b>Old cities</b>	<b>New cities</b>	<b>Religious cities</b>	<b>Arab sector</b>	<b>West Bank settlements</b>	<b>Kibbutz</b>
Likud	27.8	28.4	28.2	35.2	36.0	8.4	2.3	28.6	6.9
Labor-Meimad	9	22.6	22.3	17.2	8.8	2	6.3	4	45.5
Shinui	6.9	15.5	16.4	16.6	11.3	2.1		6.6	7.8
Shas	12.6	7.2	2.9	6.9	12.4	22.8	2.4	8.5	0.5
National Union	5.6	2.6	6.1	5.2	8.7	2.2	0.4	15.6	1.3
Meretz	4.8	11.1	5.4	4.6	2.5		4.2	1.4	27
NRP	6.5	2.5	2.8	4.3	3.4	5.6		14.4	3.7
UTJ	18.6	1.3	2	1.5	3.1	51.2		10.8	
One Nation		1.4	1.8	2.6	3.8		5	0.7	0.9
Hadash			2.4				28.8		
Balad			2.2				21.4		
Ra'am							18.6		
Yisrael biAliya	1.9		3.6	2.1	4.1		0.4	1.7	0.4

**Table 3: The 30th Government**

Prime Minister	Ariel Sharon (Likud)
Foreign Minister	Silvan Shalom (Likud)
Defense Minister	Shaul Mofaz (Likud)
Finance Minister	Benyamin Netanyahu and Meir Sheetrit (Likud)
Justice Minister	Yosef "Tommy" Lapid (Shinui)
Education, Culture and Sport Minister	Limor Livnat (Likud)
Labor and Social Affairs Minister	Zevulun Orlev (National Religious Party)
Interior Minister	Abraham Poraz (Shinui)
Communications Minister +	Ariel Sharon
Transportation Minister	Avigdor Lieberman (National Union)
Construction and Housing Minister	Effi Eitam (National Religious Party)
Health Minister	Danny Naveh (Likud)
Industry and Trade Minister	Ehud Olmert (Likud)
Religious Affairs Minister +	Ariel Sharon
Internal Security Minister	Tzahi Hanegbi (Likud)
Agriculture and Rural Minister	Yisrael Katz (Likud)
National Infrastructure Minister	Yosef Paritzky (Shinui)
Science and Technology Minister	Eliezer Zandberg (Shinui)
Environment Minister	Yehudith Naot (Shinui)
Tourism Minister	Binyamin Elon (National Union)
Immigration and Absorption Minister	Tzipi Livni (Likud)
Ministers without portfolio	Gideon Ezra, Uzi Landau, Natan Sharansky, possibly Dan Merridor (all Likud)

+Ministry scheduled to be dismantled.